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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Patent No. 7,439,329	:	
Smeal et al.	:	DECISION ON
Issue Date: October 21, 2008	:	REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION
Application No. 10/611,671	:	OF
Filed: July 2, 2003	:	PATENT TERM ADJUSTMENT
Attorney Docket No. PC23566A	:	

This is in response to the "REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF PATENT TERM ADJUSTMENT UNDER 37 CFR 1.705," filed December 19, 2008, requesting that the patent term adjustment determination for the above-identified patent be changed from five hundred sixty-six (566) days to seven hundred eighty-five (785) days.

The request for reconsideration of patent term adjustment is **DISMISSED**.

On October 21, 2008, the above-identified application matured into US Patent No. 7,439,329 with a patent term adjustment of 566 days. This request for reconsideration of patent term adjustment (including the required fee) was timely filed within two months of the issue date of the patent. See 1.705(d).

Patentees request recalculation of the patent term adjustment based on the decision in Wyeth v. Dudas, 580 F. Supp. 2d 138, 88 U.S.P.Q. 2d 1538 (D.D.C. 2008). Patentees assert that pursuant to Wyeth, a PTO delay under §154(b)(1)(A) overlaps with a delay under §154(b)(1)(B) only if the delays "occur on the same day." Patentees maintain that the period of adjustment due to the Three Year Delay by the Office, pursuant to 37 CFR § 1.703(b), of 219 days and the period of adjustment due to examination delay, pursuant to 37 CFR §1.702(a), of 683 days do not overlap as these periods do not occur on the same day.

The 219 day period is calculated based on the application having been filed under 35 U.S.C. §111(a) on July 2, 2003, and a request for continued examination (RCE) having being filed on February 6, 2007. The filing of a RCE cuts-off the applicants' ability to accumulate any additional patent term adjustment against the three-year pendency provision, but does not otherwise affect patent term adjustment. 37 CFR § 1.703(b)(1) Accordingly, the period of adjustment under § 1.702(b) is 219 days, counting the number of days beginning on July 3, 2006 and ending on February 6, 2007.

The 683 day period, pursuant to 37 CFR 1.702(a) is the sum of:

- a period of delay of 663 days for the failure by the Office to mail at least one of a notification under 35 U.S.C. 132 not later than fourteen months after the date on which the application was filed under 35 U.S.C. 111(a), pursuant to § 1.702(a)(1); and
- a period of delay of 20 days for the failure by the Office to respond to a reply under 35 U.S.C. 132 not later than four months after the date on which the reply was filed, pursuant to § 1.702(a)(2)

Under 37 CFR § 1.703(f), patentees are entitled to a period of patent term adjustment equal to the period of delays based on the grounds set forth in 37 CFR §1.702 reduced by the period of time equal to the period of time during which applicants failed to engage in reasonable efforts to conclude prosecution pursuant to 37 CFR §1.704. In other words, the period of Office delay reduced by the period of applicant delay. The period of reduction of 117 days for applicant delay is not in dispute¹.

Patentees agree that the total period of Office delay is the sum of the period of Three Years Delay terminated by the filing of a RCE (219 days) and the period of Examination Delay (683 days) to the extent that these periods of delay are not overlapping. However, patentees contend that no periods overlap. Accordingly, patentees submit that the total period of Office Delay is 902 days, which is the sum of the period of Three Year Delay terminated by the filing of a RCE (219 days) and the period of

¹ The periods of reduction include pursuant to 37 CFR 1.704(b), 34 days for response filed September 4, 2007, and pursuant to 37 CFR 1.704(c)(8), 83 days for a supplemental reply or other paper, not expressly requested by the examiner, after a reply has been filed.

Examination Delay (683 days), reduced by the period of overlap (0). See attachment to petition.

As such, patentees assert entitlement to a patent term adjustment of 785 days (219 + 683 reduced by 0 overlap - 117 days (applicant delay)).

The Office agrees that the actions detailed above were not taken within the specified time frames, and thus, the entry of period of adjustment of 683 days is correct. At issue is whether applicants should accrue 219 days of patent term adjustment for the Office taking in excess of three years to issue the patent, as well as, 683 days for Office failure to take certain actions within specified time frames (or examination delay).

The Office contends that 219 days overlap. Patentees' calculation of the period of overlap is inconsistent with the Office's interpretation of this provision. 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A) limits the adjustment of patent term, as follows:

to the extent that the periods of delay attributable to grounds specified in paragraph (1) overlap, the period of any adjustment granted under this subsection shall not exceed the actual number of days the issuance of the patent was delayed.

Likewise, 37 CFR 1.703(f) provides that:

To the extent that periods of delay attributable to the grounds specified in §1.702 overlap, the period of adjustment granted under this section shall not exceed the actual number of days the issuance of the patent was delayed.

As explained in *Explanation of 37 CFR 1.703(f) and of the United States Patent and Trademark Office Interpretation of 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A)*, 69 Fed. Reg. 34283 (June 21, 2004), the Office interprets 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A) as permitting either patent term adjustment under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(A)(i)-(iv), or patent term adjustment under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B), but not as permitting patent term adjustment under both 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(A)(i)-(iv) and 154(b)(1)(B). Accordingly, the Office implements the overlap provision as follows:

If an application is entitled to an adjustment under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B), the entire period during which the application was pending (except for periods excluded under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B)(i)-(iii)), and not just the period beginning three years after the actual filing date of the application, is the period of delay under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B) in determining whether periods of delay overlap under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A). Thus, any days of delay for Office issuance of the patent more than 3 years after the filing date of the application, which overlap with the days of patent term adjustment accorded prior to the issuance of the patent will not result in any additional patent term adjustment. See 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B), 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A), and 37 CFR § 1.703(f). See *Changes to Implement Patent Term Adjustment Under Twenty Year Term; Final Rule*, 65 Fed. Reg. 54366 (Sept. 18, 2000). See also *Revision of Patent Term Extension and Patent Term Adjustment Provisions; Final Rule*, 69 Fed. Reg. 21704 (April 22, 2004), 1282 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 100 (May 18, 2004). See also *Explanation of 37 CFR 1.703(f) and of the United States Patent and Trademark Office Interpretation of 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A)*, 69 Fed. Reg. 34283 (June 21, 2004).

The current wording of § 1.703(f) was revised in response to the misinterpretation of this provision by a number of applicants. The rule was slightly revised to more closely track the corresponding language of 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A). The relevant portion differs only to the extent that the statute refers back to provisions of the statute whereas the rule refers back to sections of the rule. This was not a substantive change to the rule nor did it reflect a change of the Office's interpretation of 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A). As stated in the *Explanation of 37 CFR 1.703(f) and of the United States Patent and Trademark Office Interpretation of 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A)*, the Office has consistently taken the position that if an application is entitled to an adjustment under the three-year pendency provision of 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B), the entire period during which the application was pending before the Office (except for periods excluded under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B)(i)-(iii)), and not just the period beginning three years after the actual filing date of the application, is the relevant period under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B) in determining whether periods of delay "overlap" under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A).

This interpretation is consistent with the statute. Taken together the statute and rule provide that to the extent that periods of delay attributable to grounds specified in 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1) and in corresponding §1.702 overlap, the period of adjustment granted shall not exceed the actual number of days the issuance of the patent was delayed. The grounds specified in these sections cover the A) guarantee of prompt Patent and Trademark Office responses, B) guarantee of no more than 3 year application pendency, and C) guarantee or adjustments for delays due to interference, secrecy orders and appeals. A section by section analysis of 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A) specifically provides that:

Section 4402 imposes limitations on restoration of term. In general, pursuant to [35 U.S.C.] 154(b)(2)(A)-(C), total adjustments granted for restorations under [35 U.S.C. 154](b)(1) are reduced as follows: (1) To the extent that there are multiple grounds for extending the term of a patent that may exist simultaneously (e.g., delay due to a secrecy order under [35 U.S.C.] 181 and administrative delay under [35 U.S.C.] 154(b)(1)(A)), the term should not be extended for each ground of delay but only for the actual number of days that the issuance of a patent was delayed; See 145 Cong. Rec. S14,718²

As such, the period for over 3 year pendency does not overlap only to the extent that the actual dates in the period beginning three years after the date on which the application was filed overlap with the actual dates in the periods for failure of the Office to take action within specified time frames. In other words, consideration of the overlap does not begin three years after the filing date of the application. Treating the relevant period as starting on July 3, 2006, the date that is 3 years after the actual filing date of the application, is incorrect.

In this instance, the relevant period under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(1)(B) in determining whether periods of delay "overlap" under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A) is the entire period during which the application was pending before the Office, July 2, 2003 to October 21, 2008. 683 days of patent term adjustment were

² The AIPA is title IV of the Intellectual Property and Communications Omnibus Reform Act of 1999 (S. 1948), which was incorporated and enacted as law as part of Pub. L. 106-113. The Conference Report for H.R. 3194, 106th Cong. 1st Sess. (1999), which resulted in Pub. L. 106-113, does not contain any discussion (other than the incorporated language) of S. 1948. A section-by-section analysis of S. 1948, however, was printed in the Congressional Record at the request of Senator Lott, See 145 Cong. Rec. S14,708-26 (1999) (daily ed. Nov. 17, 1999).

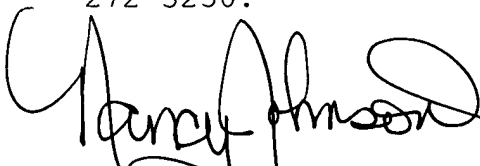
accorded prior to the issuance of the patent for the Office failing to respond within specified time frames. Otherwise, the Office took all actions set forth in 37 C.F.R. § 1.702(a) within the prescribed timeframes. Nonetheless, given the 663 + 20 days of Office delay in issuing the first Office action and in responding to an Office action and the applicant delays and the permissible timeframes for taking action, as of the filing of the request for continued examination, this application was pending 3 years and 219 days. In other words, the 683 days of delay contributed to the over three year pendency. The issuance of the patent was delayed by 683 days, not 683 + 219 days. The Office did not delay 683 days and then an additional 219 days. Entry of both periods is not warranted. 683 days is determined to be the actual number of days that the issuance of the patent was delayed, considering the 219 days for over three year pendency. Accordingly, the Office properly determined that the 219 days for Office delay in issuing the patent overlapped with the 683 days. Accordingly, at issuance, the Office properly entered no additional days of patent term adjustment for the Office taking in excess of 3 years to issue the patent.

In view thereof, the Office affirms that the correct revised determination of patent term adjustment at the time of the issuance of the patent is 566 days (683 - 117).

The Office acknowledges submission of the \$200.00 fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.18(e). No additional fees are required.

Patentees' request for refund of the fee is denied. This fee is required for consideration of the request and will not be refunded.

Telephone inquiries specific to this matter should be directed to Shirene Willis Brantley, Senior Petitions Attorney, at (571) 272-3230.



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